

Biometrics internship provides students with hands-on experience

BY GARY GRAY

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Seven WVU students are gaining both brainpower and employment security by getting hands-on experience with biometric technologies this summer at Clarksburg's Biometrics Fusion Center.

Biometrics uses a person's physical characteristics for identification and authentication. The five most prevalent types of biometrics are fingerprint, iris pattern, facial features, hand shapes and voice patterns.

The relatively young technology gives professionals the chance to make meaningful contributions, said Jeffery Simon, a WVU student from Dayton, Ohio.

"Biometrics is an exciting growth technology that offers professionals opportunities to impact the way we live just as desktop computing did in the 1990s," Simon said. "This internship will allow me to use the skills I learned at WVU in the real world. It is also fun

working on the latest technology in biometrics."

The U.S. Department of Defense's Biometrics Fusion Center has provided internships to students who applied through the federal Student Temporary Employment Program.

"The BFC provides a great opportunity to learn how biometrics are used," said James Cann III, a WVU student from Bridgeport. "I have experienced the emergence and importance of implementing biometric identification in a post-9/11 world, which has propelled its use from a rarity to an essential tool."

The seven students applied for the internships in spring and began work in late May. Each student is on a different schedule, so they will finish their internships at varying times.

"The center is always interested in working with students and giving them an opportunity to get hands-on experience," said

Cary Dell, BFC spokesman. "They are working on the internal intranet postings, writing software code and making sure the systems are maintained."

WVU biometric students have shown great aptitude in the technology, said Sam Cava, Biometrics Fusion Center director.

"We are very proud to give as many biometric engineering students as possible meaningful professional experiences in the use of biometric technologies," he said.

West Virginia is becoming a hotbed of biotech activity and a critical component of the state's future. The West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation in Fairmont, which has strong ties with WVU, is designing, developing and commercializing new products and technologies.

The Biometrics Fusion Center anchors the southern part of West Virginia's biometrics technology corridor, and WVU caps it at the north.